

A Philosophy for the Organic Universe

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Understanding the nature of the universe, the nature of life, and how to venture forth into space all took giant steps in the past century. We've seen huge advances in cosmology and astrophysics, searches for extrasolar planets, geophysics, fundamental biology and biochemistry, astrobiology and SETI, and aerospace and information-handling technologies.

Philosophical and educational approaches developed to tie all these topics together have stimulated great public interest in our origins and future in the universe. As Einstein once said, "The purpose of life is to ask what is the purpose of life." And two quotes from Loren Eiseley bring us fairly close to answering Einstein: "One could not pluck a flower without troubling a star," and "Tomorrow lurks in us, the latency to be all that was not achieved before."

Our astrobiological explorations have shown us a universe driven by both entropic and creative processes, functioning as an organic whole, with atoms forged in stellar furnaces forming the synapses allowing you to read this sentence. Cosmic evolution and life bring awareness and a degree of foresight to our connected universe, probably with growing impact on its future.

A comprehensive framework for understanding our place in our organic universe must also incorporate the three major contributions of philosophy: wisdom and values, analysis and criticism, and system and coherence. We can now begin to describe such a framework that helps us focus on "what's really important" to include in a modern educational curriculum (formal and informal) and to guide our choices and actions.